

# Town of Franklin

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OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

## Memorandum

April 28, 2023

To: Town Council  
From: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator

**Re: Introduction to PFAS in Franklin**

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The purpose of this discussion tonight is to alert the Council and public to the latest environmental cause that will have a significant impact on water rates over the next decade. DPW Director Cantreggi and Water-Sewer Superintendent Doug Martin will give an overview of what to expect in the coming years.

### Background/History

Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS) are a family of chemicals used for nonstick, stain-resistant and water-proof coatings, and in numerous consumer products, industrial uses, and firefighting foams. PFAS are resilient and do not degrade easily. As a result, they are widely found in the environment as products are disposed of and PFAS leaches into the soil and water, finding its way to food and drinking water sources.

People are exposed to PFAS from many sources, far beyond their drinking water. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), people are exposed to PFAS by food packaged in materials containing PFAS, processed with equipment that used PFAS, or grown in PFAS-contaminated soil or water. People may also have been exposed to PFAS in the workplace through production facilities or industries that involve chrome plating, electronics manufacturing, and oil recovery. In addition, many commercial household products contain PFAS, and if made outside the United States, may still be made with PFAS. Those include stain- and water-repellent fabrics, nonstick cookware and other products, polishes, waxes, paints, and cleaning products, to name a few. When found in drinking water, it is often the result of PFAS discharged from a nearby manufacturer, landfill, wastewater treatment plant, or firefighter training facility that used fire-suppressing foams.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) both note more research is needed and ongoing, but that consuming

water with high PFAS levels does not mean adverse effects will occur. As we await further scientific study, MassDEP has a drinking water standard for the sum of six PFAS compounds called PFAS6. This standard requires all Massachusetts public water suppliers to regularly test for PFAS. The sum of PFAS6 may not exceed 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), equal to 20 parts per trillion (ppt). For perspective, one ppt is equivalent to a single drop of water in 20 Olympic sized swimming pools which is approximately 13 million gallons of water.

Since October 2020, when the MassDEP PFAS6 drinking water standard went into place, Franklin has been sampling all our sources as required. All sampling has been consistently and reliably below 20 ppt for the PFAS6 except for Well 7/7A. In January of 2020, Well 7/7A had four of the six regulated PFAS being detected in finished water, with a sum of 31.4 ppt. This forced the Town to shut down the source and it has been off ever since. All other sources have consistently and reliably been below the MassDEP PFAS6 drinking water standard.

You may have heard in the news that the EPA recently issued a draft federal drinking water rule which sets the limit for certain PFAS (PFOA, PFOS, and others) lower than the Massachusetts standard. EPA is entertaining public comment on their proposal now and if the proposed rule is finalized, Massachusetts will adopt limits at least as stringent as EPA; the EPA process may take another year before it is completed.

Therefore, given the current MassDEP regulations we are proposing a \$6.5 million project to construct a new PFAS treatment facility adjacent to the current building at the Well No. 7/7A site. In addition to Well 7/7A if the proposed more stringent EPA rule goes into effect based on current sampling results we will need to provide PFAS treatment at the following locations to be in compliance with the proposed rule

- Well 5
- Well 4
- Well 8/8A
- Well 9

**The cost for treatment at all these locations including Well 7/7A is likely to be around \$50 million dollars. This does not include our other 4 well locations that are currently just under the proposed rule limits set for PFOA and PFOS.**

At the May 25th Town Council meeting we will be asking the council to appropriate the borrowing of the \$6.5 Million for the Well 7/7A project. The Town was listed on the 2023 final State Revolving Fund (SRF) intended use plan and since this project will be a PFAS treatment facility it will be eligible for an interest-free (0%) loan with additional principal loan forgiveness through the SRF program in thanks to the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

In addition to the above pending costs associated with PFAS, the Water Department has identified the following projects in order to continue delivering the required quantity of safe and reliable drinking water to our consumers.

- **Fisher Street WTP** - Replace the existing Fisher Street WTP membrane cartridge system before the estimated end of cartridge life (~2025) which could lead to WTP failure/loss of services. **Estimated cost ~ \$12 Million**
- **Water Main Replacement / Road Improvement Program** - The current \$7.5 million 5 year program is being completed in 2024 and to continue another 5 year program will cost \$10 million. **Estimated cost ~ \$10 Million**
- **Hillside Tank Replacement** - Project to eliminate concerns about the condition of these two aging tanks and to maintain reliable service in the future by replacing the approximately 100-year old steel water storage tanks with one new tank. **Estimated cost ~ \$9.5 Million**
- **Pleasant Street Tank & Low Service Area Reconfiguration** - Reconfigure the existing low service area (Pleasant Street) system to eliminate the “in series” pumping and perform needed tank rehabilitation. **Estimated cost ~ \$5.5 Million**
- **Bald Hill and Forge Hill Tank Maintenance** - Rehabilitation of Bald Hill Tank and Forge Hill Tank, including the interior overflow pipe assembly and shell manhole surfaces which are displaying extensive corrosion. **Estimated cost ~ \$3 Million**

The cost of these projects are projected to be over 40 million dollars and are vital for the Town to continue to comply with safe drinking water standards. **In order to fund all the PFAS and non PFAS projects the water rates will need to be increased over the next decade to maintain the town water supply infrastructure.**

If you have any additional questions please feel free to ask.